

Travel Tips for Chronic Pain Patients



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Generally, vacations or time away is beneficial. It can be a great way to relieve stress, which can result in decreased pain. However, please keep in mind that tolerance to activity will not be increased because you are in a beautiful location. Here are a few travel tips which can benefit chronic pain patients.

- Plan and prioritize the activities that you want to participate in; you cannot do everything. If you have difficulty walking on uneven surfaces at home, it will not be any different on vacation. Take into account the intensity and length of times the activity will require.
- Plan rest periods throughout the day. The time that you spend resting on vacation should be equal to the time you spend resting at home.
- As the travel days can be hectic and stressful, consider spending the night before you fly out and the night prior to returning at a hotel near the airport. Many have 'park and fly' packages that would cover the parking and offer shuttles that drop you close to check-in at the airport. This can prevent the activity and stress of travel that could potentially lead to a pain exacerbation.
- Request a wheelchair for the airport. It avoids your needing to stand in the security lines, provides assistance in traversing the terminals and facilitates getting on or off the airplane. Your goal is to have a reserve of energy and activity when you arrive to destination; why waste it on the airports?
- Pack all of your medications in your carry on. If you pack them in your check-in luggage, there is no guarantee that your suitcase will arrive with you, or if it arrives, that the medications will still be inside. You need to have them with you in the original containers from the pharmacy. Consider taking enough medications for a couple of days more than the trip is scheduled; in the event that travel is changed or flights cancelled, you will have sufficient quantity with you until you arrive home.
- Pace your use of medications on the travel day, just as you would do at home. Just because you are on vacation does not mean you may increase the number of pills you take each day.

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- Many patients find the vibration of air, train or car travel to be unpleasant, so you will need to have a plan of how you will manage any change in symptoms.

-If heat is your choice, you may apply *ThermaCare heat wraps* and apply them after you have completed the security screening. These can be purchased at your local drugstore i.e Rite Aid, CVS pharmacy.

-If ice is your choice, packing zip lock bags and a hand towel may be handy. You will need to try to arrange for the ice prior to boarding the plane; sometimes you can purchase it from a fast food restaurant. If traveling by car, consider packing your ice in a cooler.

- Take advantage of the spas and Jacuzzis that are available at many hotels or resorts.
- It is your responsibility to safeguard your medications at all times. Lost or stolen medications are replaced only when a police report or lost baggage locator number is provided to our office.